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## The Decorator and Furnisher.

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THE old school of decorators favored the use of dark and heavy furniture, chairs, sideboards and tables being abundantly carved, but the light tones of wood now so generally adopted, also the bright enlivening treatment of walls, and a certain gaiety in color designs of ceilings, remove that solemnity of aspect that was once thought to be a component element of stateliness, substantiability being still maintained. Carving has yielded to general simplicity of handsome forms and surfaces. In accordance with this more cheery aspect it is generally allowed that the fire-place should show as little iron as possible, the sides and back being preferably of terra cotta or encaustic tiles. If the floor is not of well finished hard wood the best resort is to parquet, which is now so made in flexible squares that it can easily be laid on ordinary floors with little trouble and cost. It must be admitted that there is nothing superior to a polished oak floor, but such a floor is somewhat of a rarity.

VAIN have been the abstruse investigations that have been made in conic sections for the purpose of tracing the source from which the outlines of Greek and Etruscan vases were derived, should the theory now put forward abroad be adjudged true that they were derived from the outlines of leaves, stems also being taken into account in forming the contours. In sketches furnished of vases and leaves is one where a leaf being laid beside the globular body of a vase, the portion touching it is shown in its contour to constitute the segment of a circle; other leaves supply the elliptic curves carried out by the designers. A number of leaves of the same kind disposed at different angles are held to furnish the types of various vases. The theory if true is a pleasant and poetical one, and possesses some apparent basis. In the sketches that have been made of the outline of vases and of leaves within, the leaves having stem at top, reaching into the neck, afford a test of this ingenious theory.

AMONG early English devices for wall hangings were "stayned cloths." In one illustration of an interior these hangings are shown in looped up folds covering a dado, the upper portion of wall being decorated in a series of panels with full length figures, their apparel in brilliant colors. An inventory of the time of Henry VIII contains the item, "paynted cloths with stories and batailles of beyond sea work," meaning Flanders. Another set of hangings now in Hampton Court, London, and dating from the middle of the 16th century, contains the adven-



## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

tures of Columbus, which were painted by Andrea Montegna for the Duke of Mantua. The paint in all cases was extremely thin so that it might not crack by folds in the cloth. It was a frequent practice to prime cloth with melted wax before painting on it.

**B**USTS on pediments—these pediments not broken columns but antique fashioned supports, and the busts carried down in the round to the plane of juncture, as was the style in the time of Louis XVI, should only be placed in spacious halls or landings; or if in an apartment, one alone should appear in a corner, or if on brackets or provided wall recesses, two are appropriate. We refer to properly setting them off with reference to aspect as well as space, for a white surface should never be in excess. Where the support is of ebony or its simulations, there is much to be said in favor of applying to it flower garlands, ribbon forms, and other ornaments in embossed fire gilt brass, or other metals gilded.

**F**RAGMENTS of silver table ware, such as dishes and flagons contorted in form, and with portions absent as though they had been subjected to the melting heat of some fierce conflagration, are being sold as curios apparently for the varied and indescribable tints on their surface. Such articles, however, may be manufactured, the weird-like colored hues being produced by the application of certain gases. It is, therefore, quite an explainable circumstance that the bases of these tortured articles are usually found flat and uninjured by the mythical flames.

**A**N instance of novelty in design in articles of utility compassing nothing but failure, so far as acceptance by the public is concerned, occurs in a porcelain tea service in which the cups take the form of an inverted cone, the apex finding lodgment in a provided central aperture in each saucer. The cup is solid for a third of its depth. The apology for this departure from all ordinary forms—and it needs an apology—is that with the present styles of cups they are apt to be overturned. Against this must be set the trouble of hitting accurately the socket of a cup in the act of replacing it.

**B**OLD architraves on doors of rooms of even moderate area constitute a decided finish to the whole interior. They improve the door itself, giving it a more stately look, removing the usual weakness of appearance at top. A good design is simply a thick broad shelf at top, supported by bold brackets and sustaining a few articles of vertu, such as Oriental jars. The eyes espying a door naturally look upward, and these ornaments, seen at a different angle than usual, present a new and pleasing aspect.

**A**FORM however ornamented should itself, in respect to excellence of construction and beauty of appearance, be independent of the ornament. It has been said of the Byzantine buildings that their stately impressiveness is wholly independent of the effect produced by the incrustation of marbles and mosaics.

**W**HERE stained glass is required for the partial or entire enrichment of a window space already plainly glazed, and it is not desired to go the expense of new sashes, leaded glazing can be fixed in mahogany frames hinged like folding shutters.

**P**OLISHED floors are extremely suitable for bedrooms, as allowing of the exclusive use of rugs with handsome effect. An invariable accompaniment of carpets in sleeping apartments should be a broad stained or painted border, with or without wax finish.

**A**NOVEL wall-paper frieze consists of alternate panels of stamped embossed designs in gold and silver, these panels being perforated so as to show, as part of the design, a ground color on the wall such as vermilion or blue or that of the middle space beneath.

**A**SCREEN designed to hide the fireplace, when the grate is merely laid for a fire, consists of panels of beveled mirrors, each half sliding out of receptacles provided on each side of the mantel.

**T**HE merit of decorative work is in some respects relative rather than absolute. This is the case with all art. We praise a picture for its suggestiveness as well as for its technical qualities.

**A**RTICLES of furniture are now being ornamented with fine tortoise shell japan ground. The making of this surface is an old French and English art, the method of preparing it being as follows: Take one gallon of good linseed oil and half a pound of umber; boil them together till the oil becomes very brown and black; then strain it through a coarse cloth and set it again to boil, in which state it must be continued till it acquires a consistence resembling pitch; it will then be fit for use. Having thus prepared the varnish, the surface to be japanned must be cleaned well. Then lay vermilion tempered with shellac varnish, or with drying oil very thinly diluted with oil of turpentine, on the places intended to imitate the more transparent parts of the tortoise shell. When the vermilion is dry, brush the whole over with black varnish, tempered to a due consistence with the oil of turpentine. Having applied it with a brush, and when set firm, put the work into a stove where it may undergo a strong heat, which must be continued for a considerable time; if even three weeks or a month it will be the better.

**B**Y an unfortunate oversight the article on "Rare Forms of Orchids" in our last issue was stated to have been translated from *La Nature*. Credit for the translation should have been given to Appleton's *Popular Science Monthly*, to which excellent journal is also due the rendering of the article on *Chrysanthemums* elsewhere published.

**I**N wall hangings and friezes, and scroll work on furniture is still traceable the influence of Oriental art, which never fails of a certain delicacy combined with an evident capriciousness. The spectator is gratified by both characteristics as displaying thoughtfulness of design. It is worth noting that the tissues from Mussulman countries that followed the opening of commerce between East and West became arabesques in the hands of European artists.

**S**YMMETRY of parts will often go far to render a piece of furniture attractive. Symmetry does not imply duplication, but may consist in a studied and well balanced regularity of parts, regard being had to quantity. Furniture thus treated should have nevertheless some features of similarity in details. Nature shows some of her finest effects in irregularities under such conditions. Through not understanding the principle under which lies any charm in irregularity, sofas are being turned out with comma-like backs, bristling, three in a row, in different heights, with curves which fail from their unsightliness to suggest, as all curves should, the completion of the oval, and which threaten the slipping off of the head if placed against them, on to the wall or vacant space beyond.

**A**LEADING Western furniture manufacturer, who lately visited New York, and whose house is famous for its original productions, declared to us that he dreamed out when asleep some of his best designs, and seldom failed to sketch on paper in the morning the result of the night's inspirations.

**I**T has been said of the Italian renaissance that its spirit and style can be better studied in the decorative ornaments and furniture of the interiors of its structures than in the structures themselves.

**N**O country makes such large carpets as Turkey. France beats all countries in the area of uncarpeted floors. The people of the United States purchase more carpets per annum than all European nations.

**A**PRETTY device for decorating a dining table at Christmas was a grape-bearing vine set in an open rustic box and running its whole length, sufficiently low not to obstruct the view of guests sitting *vis a vis*.

**T**HE distribution of flowers in a room is ordinarily to be preferred to banking them on a mantel shelf or console table.

**W**HAT a misnomer is our furniture word sideboard, apply—as it did originally to actual boards on trestles used in dining rooms in early times.

**B**EAUTY of execution will go far towards rendering any subject suitable for art.